

FOUR WEEKS AS
ACTING COMMANDANT AT THE
BELGIAN FIELD HOSPITAL.

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Arrival of the King at the Hospital.

FOUR WEEKS
AS ACTING COMMANDANT
AT THE
BELGIAN
FIELD HOSPITAL.

BY
EDWARD R. P. MOON.

WITH A PREFACE BY
LORD SYDENHAM.

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v. 53

To
MY WIFE.

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PREFACE.

THE Belgian Field Hospital was established at Antwerp early in September, 1914, under the gracious patronage of Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians, who provided its first habitation, and entrusted its maintenance to the British people. After the arrival of British troops on October 5th, the hospital received and treated about seventy British wounded, and during its stay of six weeks at Antwerp some seven hundred cases passed through its wards. When the German bombardment began to take effect, the hospital was evacuated, and 113 wounded were safely brought away,

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amidst scenes of death and destruction, during which the staff displayed devoted heroism. After a short stay at Ostend, the hospital was re-established at Furnes, about six miles behind the Belgian lines on the Yser, to be again driven out by the German artillery, and to find a third home elsewhere in a 'Hospice,' of the nature of a large almshouse. Here, still within short distance of the fighting line, it has for many months striven to minister to the Belgian wounded, and while retaining the character of a Field Hospital, it has been able to provide comforts not generally available in such close proximity to the trenches.

In the following pages, Mr. Moon gives a sketch of his experiences as acting commandant. The everyday life of the hospital is vividly presented, and readers will be able to picture the work of the

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hospital in the strange environment of war, and to realise the many difficulties which have to be surmounted. All who have generously supported our efforts to tend the Belgian wounded, can learn from this little booklet, which combines charm of expression with material for reflexion, the nature of the duties which fall upon the staff, and the appreciation that their labours have won from our gallant Allies. Nursing has not been developed in Belgium to the full extent which past experience has enforced upon us at home, and there can be no doubt that the tender care of the British nurses has evoked the warm gratitude of the Belgian soldiers. New links and fuller mutual understanding between the two peoples are thus being created, which will long outlast the present war.

It is by the means of such institutions

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as the Belgian Field Hospital that we can, in some measure, repay the debt we owe to the Belgian army, which nobly went to the sacrifice in August and September of last year, in order to gain the time necessary for the concentration of forces that stemmed the great advance of the mass of the German army, saved Paris, and turned the Western campaign to the advantage of the Allies.

Months of War may still lie before us, and winter has begun. Incidentally, Mr. Moon indicates wants that remain to be supplied, and improvements that need to be carried out. The Committee is fully alive to the requirements which the Commandant brings to their notice, and they hope, with the co-operation of the Belgian authorities, to render the hospital capable of meeting any demands that may be made upon it in the near future.

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The expenses now exceed £250 a week, and tend to increase, so that further assistance will be gratefully received from all to whom Mr. Moon's graphic account of the daily round of those who are ministering to the wounded behind the battle-line may appeal. It is our earnest hope to be able to maintain this work until the star of peace returns, and to show to our Patron that the British people have responded to the trust which Her Majesty has reposed in them.

SYDENHAM OF COOMBE,

*President of the Belgian Field Hospital
and Chairman of the Committee.*

November 27th, 1915.

‘TRIFLES MAY BE A WHET TO MORE
SERIOUS THOUGHT.’

ERASMUS

*In the Dedication to Sir Thomas More
of ‘The Praise of Folly.’*



Madame Curie.



FOUR WEEKS AS
ACTING COMMANDANT AT THE
BELGIAN FIELD HOSPITAL.

Belgian Field Hospital,
8th September, 1915.

‘ I SHALL never forget the great Furnes-
‘ Ypres road on which the Hospice
‘ lies—I shall never forget the rushing
‘ and tearing of the rumbling or puf-
‘ fing motor-lorries with their grey bodies
‘ and drab canvas tops, full of food
‘ or munitions; the countless motor-cars,
‘ the occasional horse-drawn cart, the
‘ posts of gendarmes where “papers” *
‘ had to be produced; men in uniform

* See p. 47.

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‘ moving up and down in twos or threes
‘ between the long lines of tall poplars or
‘ lounging in larger groups in the road-
‘ side villages, mounted men in strings
‘ with led horses stirring up dust in the
‘ middle of the road on days when water
‘ splashed up from puddles at the side.
‘ But there is seldom any organized body
‘ with rifles. The armed men, it seems,
‘ move at night or in the dusk ; I gener-
‘ ally hear cavalry moving to the east of
‘ my tent about 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. The
‘ camps are mostly in villages which lie
‘ a little off the road.

‘ On the first night, August 16th, I
‘ noticed the sound of the guns, as my tent-
‘ door faces east, and is within seven kilo-
‘ mètres of the German trenches ; but my
‘ “ Office ” window faces west. There was
‘ a smart cannonading from 6 a.m. to
‘ 8 a.m. this morning, but it does not

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‘ make much impression. The ambulances
‘ which bring in the wounded, arrive by a
‘ side entrance, and deposit their burden
‘ at back of the Hospice—of course at any
‘ hour of the day or night—perhaps an
‘ average of three “*blessés*,” as we call
‘ them, in the twenty-four hours. Yester-
‘ day afternoon an important General was
‘ brought in; he had had tea in this
‘ office on Sunday fortnight; a stream of
‘ visitors now comes and writes their
‘ names in his Enquiry Book, placed with
‘ a bulletin on a small table in our ves-
‘ tibule. Such is life! But there are
‘ some here who were present at the
‘ evacuation of Antwerp and the shelling
‘ of Furnes, who have seen war at really
‘ close quarters; who have brought in
‘ with their own motors the wounded and
‘ dying, covered with the filth of the
‘ trenches and drenched with blood; or

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‘ who have received them and ministered
‘ to them in their thus enhanced misery.
‘ But that is another story, and is it not
‘ written — and brilliantly written — by
‘ Mr. Souttar in his *Surgeon in Belgium*?
‘ Now, though we only take in the more
‘ seriously wounded, we are spared the
‘ aggravation of dirt and drive. An
‘ ambulance which leaves two “*blessés*”
‘ with us takes on perhaps five to some
‘ Base Hospital. If I had prayed for
‘ the Belgian Field Hospital, “Give peace
‘ in our time, O Lord!” the prayer might
‘ seem to have been answered by the
‘ absence of “rushes,” which encumber
‘ floors and corridors with dead and
‘ dying, and keep doctors and nurses
‘ working for five days at a stretch,
‘ mostly on coffee.

‘ On either side of the main door are
‘ two small and lofty rooms, each with a

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‘ small and lofty window. These are the
‘ “*Grand Parloir*” and “*Petit Parloir*” of
‘ the Hospice. In the *Petit Parloir* the
‘ *Gestionnaire* sits, with two clerks, and
‘ works and (is not his bed there?)
‘ sleeps.* The *Grand Parloir* is the office
‘ of the Commandant: and here he sits,
‘ with such state as he can command, at
‘ a trestle table, on a rush-bottom chair,
‘ with a “*chaise de luxe*” in the shape of
‘ a green canvas deck-chair for visitors
‘ of distinction. I think most of you
‘ will have read *Fighting in Flanders*.
‘ On page 168 you will find an account
‘ of my Secretary—that is, the Secretary
‘ to the Commandant for the time being—
‘ Mrs. Winterbottom, who transacts busi-
‘ ness on the other side of this said table.
‘ She drives her own car, and is most

* I owe the admirable photo opposite the title-page to the *Gestionnaire*’s skill and kindness.

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• obliging in taking her "master," as I am
‘ occasionally called by her, "around."
‘ Under my *régime*, she was the chief
‘ envoy of the Belgian Field Hospital at
‘ the Belgian Headquarters. The Com-
‘ mandant and his Secretary each at
‘ their side has an important cupboard,
‘ a packing-case with two shelves, con-
‘ taining the Archives though not the
‘ Arcana of the Belgian Field Hospital.
‘ The Arcana repose in an iron safe, the
‘ deportability of which often caused me
‘ to think furiously.

‘ Madame Curie left to-day after her
‘ second visit (the second since I have
‘ been here) of about a week. She has
‘ "*beaucoup de sympathie*" for this Hos-
‘ pital, and has confided to us her
‘ daughter Irène, aged eighteen, to help
‘ in our Radiography until the end of
‘ her holidays.

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‘The country round is pretty; doubt-
‘less at this time the wonderful variety
‘of colour ekes out a landscape which
‘is not in itself striking. There are
‘fine churches in unknown villages, pic-
‘turesque windmills and quaint, one-
‘storied cottages with mild yellow
‘plaster, faded green shutters, and roofs
‘covered with well-weathered mellow
‘tiles. Then again there are some de-
‘lightful Flemish towns, not battered
‘out of recognition like Ypres, though
‘showing sinister gaps in streets and
‘buildings; such are Furnes and Dun-
‘kirk. Bergues and Hondschoote. At
‘Bergues in particular I noted that
‘the chief hotel, the “Tête d’Or,” was
‘“closed for repairs”; the Tête d’Or
‘itself being a gilded classical bust, near
‘to which a long inscription related how
‘Lamartine had written in the hotel his

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‘celebrated, but to me unknown, poem
‘called “Nemesis,” after he had suffered
‘an electoral defeat in this town. He
‘represented it at one time in the thirties
‘of last century. The Hôtel de l’Ange
‘had, on the other hand, escaped, except
‘that some of its windows were broken
‘by the concussion of a shell—a circum-
‘stance which may be thought by some
‘to have a bearing on the statements
‘that in some instances in this war sacred
‘objects have been preserved when secular
‘objects around perished.’

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The seventy-one miles of road from Boulogne to the Belgian Field Hospital lay through several Picard towns famous in English history: Guînes and Calais, Gravelines and Dunkirk. At Guînes, slept our Henry VIII. before the inter-

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view with Francis on the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Calais, having previously been a 'haven of pirates' (J. R. Green), was held by us for over two hundred years; it was off Gravelines that the Armada received its last crushing blow, and Dunkirk (Church of the Dunes) was held by the English for four years after the Battle of the Dunes. Then came the first Belgian town, famous in this War and in the history of the Belgian Field Hospital—Furnes. On my first entrance, Furnes was dark, but I learned to know and admire the three imposing piles of its stately buildings, either speeding westwards towards them from Dunkirk, or sitting on the quarter-deck of the barge *Julia*, on the canal, where Miss Close, in alternation with Miss Maxine Elliott, and for the time helped by Lady Charnwood, 'clothes the naked' among the neigh-

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bouring Belgians, on behalf of 'The American Commission for Relief in Belgium.'

Standing stiffly and stolidly out of the dead flat, on the north and left, lie the Dunes—with their long barrier rising to varying and irregular heights. Was it not between Adinkerke and Ghyvelde that the Battle of the Dunes* was fought?

Before long I became familiar with the battered dignity of the Grand' Place of Furnes, where the Heads of three Allied States met last winter. At Furnes begins the long straight road which leads south to Ypres, and it is on this road that the Belgian Field Hospital has its present home. This was the route

* To the historically minded, I venture to commend an extract from Murray's *France*, forming Appendix III., p. 73.



Madame la Directrice et nos gracieuses Infirmières.

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which I traversed on my outward journey, arriving after supper had begun. On my arrival I expressed the wish to meet the staff. We gathered, after supper, in the nurses' sitting-room and I said a few words, repeating in French each sentence which I had said in English—when I did not forget to say the one or the other. The *médecin-en-chef* presented me to the gathering generally, and when I was 'down,' had the kindly thought to introduce me to the doctors individually, the matron followed suit with the nurses, so that I was able to shake hands with each, and to feel that we were making a friendly beginning.

The early history of the Belgian Field Hospital, begun at Antwerp and Furnes, is contained in the *Surgeon in Belgium*. In January, German shells came crashing

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into its premises at Furnes, killed a nurse, and caused a precipitate evacuation to fresh woods and pastures new. The Belgian Government selected the Hospice Y., and there the present organization has been gradually built up.

The Commandant, in theory, controls everything: except so far as the Medical Staff are professionally under a Belgian *médecin-en-chef*, and so far as the nurses are under the jurisdiction of the Matron—addressed by foreigners as *Madame la Directrice*. In fact, however, there exist two other concurrent authorities. The Committee of the Hospice Y., composed of the Burgomaster and others of the Commune of X., control such parts of the buildings as the Government has not requisitioned, and are, to an undefined extent, represented by the *Mère Supérieure* of a group of *religieuses*

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belonging to the Order of St. Vincent de Paul. The Belgian Government are represented by a lieutenant in the army, entitled the '*Gestionnaire*.' Under his direct military orders were some thirty-eight *brancardiers* (stretcher-bearers), who acted as orderlies in the wards and attended to the latrines, sterilisers, incinerator, pack-store, &c. The *Gestionnaire* ordered, at a Central Belgian Government Store in Calais, certain drugs and medical stores, and indented on the Belgian Government at various depôts for coal, petrol, and paraffin—the ultimate incidence of the charge for these commodities being a matter for future attention. He put up, of his own initiative, various wooden buildings which seemed to him useful or necessary.

The occupations of the day varied so much that I cannot successfully follow

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the system of Verdant Green and pack the incidents of many days into a few.

I was called at 6.30 a.m. or, sometimes, 6 a.m., by one of the three Théophiles who were on the books of the Hospital. The tent-door faced east, a trying aspect at bath-time when the wind blew from that quarter, but delightful if the early sun did its duty. On the far side of the brook, Belgian soldiers with towels wended their way to a point where they could wash their hands and faces. There were numerous other tents in this portion of the Hospice meadow. It was approached through another portion of the meadow in which the Hospice kept its 'longicaudate kine' within a barbed-wire fence. Here one of the Reverend Sisters might now and then be seen in her mediæval robes at work on a real old-fashioned milking-stool. This fence had

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to be negotiated by two narrow apertures closed in at the top, so that it was necessary to stoop and bend to get through this pair of miniature Caudine Forks—a process which sometimes involved the humiliation of tearing one's uniform on the barbed wire attached to the side-posts of one opening. When the dews or the rain were heavy, the long grass of the meadow, combined with the incidents of occupation by cows, made it superfluous to use a clean pair of boots to begin the day.

The fields sloped pleasantly up from the brook, which ran (when it was not dried up) a few yards in front of my tent-door, to a not-distant horizon. Behind the slope could be heard at nights the patter of cavalry going to or returning from the trenches beyond. Occasionally the dogs of the dog-batteries made the

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night hideous ; generally, cannon were booming—though I did not notice this much after the first night—and now and then came the more than drowsy hum of an airship. Through the tall poplars bordering the brook shone on some mornings the soft autumn sun to bless my bath at the tent-door ; on other mornings the east wind blew to brace me for the day's battles. 'Time did not permit' (to use one of Campbell-Bannerman's Queen's-speech phrases) to investigate systematically the history of the Tent-Movement at the Belgian Field Hospital. When more pressing calls relaxed, and I was able to reconnoitre the more ornamental parts of our domain, I found that the tents had overflowed the legitimate tenting-ground at the back, so that there were beds and tents obstructing the paths and occupying the lawns in the front garden in a





Mr. Young conducts Madame Curie to Calais.

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manner which hardly conduced to the general convenience or tidiness. But, *à la guerre comme à la guerre*; and as a Marquis-Major in the Guides (the smart cavalry corps of Belgium) wrote to me, one must recognise '*le magnifique dévouement de vos gracieuses infirmières.*' This question, however, will doubtless be duly regulated by my successor after the rigours of winter have driven the tent-dwellers indoors, and so left him a *tabula rasa*, or, at least, one encumbered with the precedents of only one 'hot weather.'

Breakfast was prepared at 7.40 a.m. for the nurses who were going on day duty; at 8 a.m. for the rest of us. No one was to be served after nine; but it often happened that I was kept in the office till nearly nine dispatching the 'daily mail' to Dunkirk, or interviewing all and sundry.

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Every day a motor, great or small, went at least once (occasionally three times) into Dunkirk—our base of supplies—some twenty miles distant. The outward load was relatively light. It comprised the letters of some 150 people, returned empties (jars of hydrogen peroxide and ‘Winchesters’ of various disinfectants), and generally some passengers, such as members of the staff bound for home on leave or for shopping in Dunkirk ; occasionally nuns from the Hospice, going elsewhere.

À propos of motors, mention may be made of the practice of hailing motors to get lifts. This is done by both officers and privates. A point was generally selected by them at which cars had to slow down either because of a stop caused by road-repairing (it was astonishing how often one whole half of a road was under

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repair) or to exhibit 'papers' to sentries or gendarmes. The West Gate of Dunkirk was, I heard, a favourite place, and, in fact, when I showed my papers there on my way to meet my successor and bring him in from Calais, a smart French officer of the 3rd Zouaves waved his *per-missionnaire* paper, murmured his name, and asked to be taken to Calais-Ville Station to catch the 12.30 to Paris. A place was vacant, Calais-Ville Station was not much out of our way, so he came in and had a vigorous talk with a Belgian officer who had recovered at the Belgian Field Hospital, and was being taken to Calais-Maritime, *en route* for convalescence in England.

This digression may serve to indicate the various uses to which our fleet of nine cars was liable to be put. Frequent journeys, sometimes at short notice—

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sometimes before 8 a.m.—were made to the Belgian Headquarters, some six miles off; and in the afternoons such of the wounded as were able to go to a Base Hospital were ‘evacuated’ to a railway station west of Furnes.

The home journey of the ‘daily mail’ was more serious—one daily item was a *demi-fût* (twenty gallon cask) of the worst beer which I have drunk since I was at Winchester. It curiously resembled the detestable Winchester fluid. But, as the water was doubtful, I mostly drank beer; and, as the meat was generally too tough to masticate, my main non-liquid stand-by was jam. This was provided for the Hospital by an Australian firm. It was so excellent that, though I hesitated to invite neighbours to lunch or dinner, I could honestly dilate on the merits of the jam produced by the

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Peacock Jam Co. ('O.K. Pure Jam'), N.S.W., which was supplied to us in generous quantities—holding out especially the excellence of a certain melon and lemon compound as an attraction at tea-time, though before and after it might really form an important addition to one's own lunch and dinner.

Accommodation at the Hospital for supplies being exceedingly limited, such of these—a very large proportion—as reached Dunkirk by sea were transferred from the docks to our dépôt at Rosendaël—a suburb of Dunkirk. One of our old brancardiers, who won the esteem of all who knew him—'Joseph,' in peace a schoolmaster at Antwerp—presided here. Here he kept the books and arranged the stores with admirable method and neatness. A quiet, obliging man, full of energy, this was only part of his work.

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He made the upper rooms and the garden of the villa, which was our dépôt, available for a sort of Y.M.C.A., which he himself had founded. Here, at the 'Foyer des Alliés,' as he had named it, every evening, and on Sundays in the afternoon also, soldiers could come, read, sing, or listen to music—not without light refreshments, tea, coffee, and cocoa. Up to the time when I visited this, the *clientèle*, which appeared to be numerous, mainly consisted of French soldiers, but it was hoped to draw in more English. The English 'Commandant de la place' was in full sympathy, but Joseph's most practical supporter was the admirable 'Commandant de la place belge,'*

* These officials looked after their 'nationals' at Dunkirk. The grammar of the phrase I never fathomed, *i.e.*, whether 'belge' related to place or to Commandant.



Doctors and Nurses.

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Colonel Claes. Whether the basis was religious or merely philanthropic I failed to ascertain.

Our fleet of motors numbered nine, some of the ambulance type and some open. These were managed by Mr. Young, an owner-driver. After a hard week it was a great relief to go twenty or thirty miles out and back, even though these Sunday drives were often necessitated by some urgent hospital business. One Sunday it was necessary to go to Headquarters about the water supply, which the drought had brought to a precipitate end. Another Sunday an interview was necessary with General Mélis, Inspector-General of the Belgian '*Service de Santé*.' On returning from his headquarters, motor traffic was suddenly held up at the mouth of the main street of Hondschoote where it

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debouches on the Grand' Place opposite the cathedral. The traffic was in charge of a French sergeant, who spoke English which was not nearly as intelligible as his French. During the pause of an hour, while they were apparently excavating a German bomb which had embedded itself a mile beyond the town, he conversed amiably. He seemed to prefer to describe himself as 'Parigot' rather than 'Parisien,' and when I suggested he was now '*Au fond de la province*,' he replied, '*Oui, Monsieur, au fin fond de la province!*'

Occasional motor-drives were not, however, the only form of recreation. The walks and rides, it is true, were somewhat circumscribed, owing to an intimation from the Belgian Headquarters, of which the sweet reasonableness was not entirely obscure. But those who hold



A Hospital Mascot.



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with Lord Palmerston that the best thing for the inside of a man is the outside of a horse, could obtain health and pleasure through the kind offices of various Belgian officers. What a refreshment to ride over that quiet country on one of those 'bland' afternoons of an Indian summer, with little to remind one that death and destruction were being meted out a few miles away! Then, too, various divisions, regiments, and special sections gave entertainments in the afternoon or evening, musical or theatrical, to which our '*gracieuses infirmières*' and the rest of the Hospital Staff were invited, the 'heads of departments' being seated in places of honour.

On the road from Boulogne to the Hospital, the Secretary to the Commandant, the repository of the traditions, extending over several months, of

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the Belgian Field Hospital, explained to me that one of the first duties of my post was to call on the Notabilities, and, knowing most, if not all, of these personages intimately, most obligingly accompanied me, and drove me in her own celebrated car. I wrote my name in the book of the King and Queen at their villa, and was disturbed to find that the necessary description of myself—‘*Commandant intérimaire du Belgian Field Hospital*’—swelled out, together with my name, into two whole lines of the Royal Book, while the entries of officers, doubtless distinguished, did not as a rule exceed half a line. Then there was the British Military Mission, the French Military Mission, the Chief of the General Staff, the General Commanding the 1st Division of the Belgian Army, the General Commanding the

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2nd Division of the Belgian Army, and last, but not least, the Head of the Intelligence Department of the Grand Quartier Général. He had been not only in the Belgian Congo,* but in British South Africa. If I may presume to sum him up by the description of the Knight in *Hudibras*; 'He knows what's what!' and doubtless his 'metaphysic wit,' had he desired to use it, was as effective as his practical abilities.

* I do not know whether the Congo bulks very largely in the Belgian brain. One day an officer of Secret Police came to my office, and, showing me a not very clearly-typed document, in which one of our nurses had the reason of her arrival set down as 'Retour de Congé' (the last letter being faint), asked whether she had just been in the Congo.

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DOCTORS AND NURSES.

Our Anglo-Saxon surgeons had had 'wide' experience. Their spheres of work suggested the largeness of area implied in Pope's phrase 'China to Peru,' and by the unclassical 'Jerusalem and Madagascar.' For one had been head of a hospital in Madagascar, and another had put in fourteen years in China, including the fighting of the 1911 Revolution. A third of our doctors had worked with the 'top-notch' surgeons in New York, while a fourth had returned to his native country from a large and lucrative practice in the same city.

Divers of the nurses, too, came from afar: one wore the badge which the Dominion of New Zealand confers on its nurses, all of whom are registered by the State; another, whose husband was an

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English officer in our trenches, hailed from North Carolina. Four came from South Africa, two as Afrikanders and two as sojourners there; these had an advantage over the rest, as their knowledge of the South African 'taal' enabled them to converse with the Flemish-speaking *blessés*. At least two wore South African War medal ribbons, and one of these had in addition a Balkan order. So the Anglo-Saxon race was pretty generally represented.

Sometimes I went to the wards, either to congratulate officers who had been decorated by the King, or to instal pails of earth for checking any outbreak of fire, or to consider how to meet the dangers of the Primus stoves in the ward-kitchens (to give a grand name to a tiny partitioned space), and now and then to accompany the doctors on their

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daily round at 9.30 a.m. I saw sad sights, heard strange tales—saw pious soldiers wearing scapulars, heard how one had come in with his pockets full of dried lizards, how another had in his trouser-pocket the head of a German—kept there for four days—and how bitterly he wept at being deprived of this grisly treasure.

I shall always remember the sympathetic way in which the King bent over and talked with those who could not lift themselves in their bed, and how he spoke to every *blessé* in the ward. The King paid three visits to the Belgian Field Hospital during my short period; the Queen came once in the four weeks and General Joffre once—to decorate a distinguished Belgian General. ‘*Ministre d’État*’ Vandervelde paid a visit one day with an English artist who had painted

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his picture in England. The latter, with their party, had tea in our banqueting hall—formerly the kitchen.

The *médecin-en-chef*, who has no small reputation in Belgium as a *conférencier*, one day paid me the compliment of inviting me to attend one of his lectures. These he delivered to Belgian army-doctors, who arrived in motors from their various posts. They took place at the end of one of the wards, and were accompanied by large, clear, and valuable tables of a statistical nature hung on the walls. The eternal question, to operate or not to operate, was dealt with in a most lucid way, and perhaps inevitably suggested to the unprofessional mind the profane question raised by Fielding—whether lance or lancet has taken more victims.

The general treatment of the subject (*plaies abdominales*) could be appreciated

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even by an ignorant layman. Incidentally I note that his theory seemed to coincide with the ancient observation that '*Les grands chirurgiens font les grands trous.*' Several patients had their wounds undressed to illustrate points in the lecture, but, doubtless out of consideration for the weakness of non-professional nerves, I was not encouraged to attend the operation which formed the culminating event of the *conférence*.

I should not omit to mention the *aumônier*—a Belgian priest, clad in khaki, who ministered to the spiritual necessities of the Roman Catholic inmates of the hospital—whether doctors, *blessés*, *brancardiers*, old men and women, or *religieuses*. He said mass daily and, on Sundays, shortly after a little ten minutes' service (a Sunday family prayers held in the nurses' sitting-room) with its unaccom-

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panied hymn, could be heard proceeding from the chapel at the other end of the main building the beautiful music in which several instruments joined to begin the *aumônier's* High Mass.

At one stage of the Belgian Field Hospital's stay in its present quarters, one of the staff was an English clergyman. He had signed on as a chauffeur, and in his time, I am told, Prince Alexander of Teck used to come all the way from the British Mission to attend the service. There are many who regret that the services of a clergyman are not easily available. There are several partially English hospitals in the neighbourhood, and these probably would appreciate such help. Lady Bagot, for instance, who has a hospital not far off, used to be a regular worshipper at St. Peter's, Vere Street, in the days when

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the Dean of Salisbury was there; her chauffeur is a son of Prebendary Carlile, founder of the Church Army, and there are at least two Imperial Units in the neighbourhood, whose identity and locality I must not more particularly reveal.

* * * *

This is to warn the gentle reader that he is at liberty to deal with the remaining heading, which treats of modern 'circumlocution offices,' and with the three appendices, just in the way that Fielding permits theatre-goers to treat prologues, and readers of 'Tom Jones' to treat the 'several initial chapters' of each of the eighteen books of that classical work—namely, to skip them.

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‘PAPERS.’

I don't know how spies fare, but in order to reach Belgium respectable persons have to spend laborious days in providing themselves with the documents which, after thirteen months of war, the various authorities had excogitated as useful or necessary. My experience was as follows :—

1. The Secretary of the Belgian Field Hospital wired to me at Buxton, where I had begun a cure, to send him seven photos of myself.

2. Next a form of application for passport was filled up. This rivals in point of inquisitiveness the form imposed on visitors to the U.S.A. Furthermore it states that the applicant has to give up all other passports in his possession. To this clause I demurred, and I wrote letters to

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the Under-Secretary of State, formal and informal, asking to be allowed to retain my old passports—which formed a collection by which I set much store.

3. I attended at the wooden shanty erected in the quadrangle of the great block of buildings, on the south side of Downing Street, which contains the Foreign Office, &c. In course of time I gained admittance to the inner sanctum of this tabernacle, and was told that if I had brought the old passports for cancellation, they would have been returned to me and the new passport issued. I was not, however, trusted to return them by post or by another hand, but I must myself bring them before I could receive the new passport. This meant another journey to this establishment the day after, when, in the absence of the amiable official who had promised that

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the minimum of defacement should be inflicted in cancelling my treasured souvenirs, I had to wait more than an hour.

4. In the meantime, the indefatigable Secretary of the Belgian Field Hospital had obtained for me a document from Belgium which he called a 'Requisition.' The austere severity, the frigid economy of welcome displayed by this document, makes it worth setting out :—

SERVICE DE SANTÉ DE L'ARMÉE INSPECTION GÉNÉRALE.

Le 7 août 1915.

Je soussigné, Inspecteur général du service de santé de l'armée, déclare ne voir aucun inconvénient à ce que M. Morrison, Commandant du Belgian Field Hospital, soit remplacé temporairement dans son service par M. Robert Percy (*sic*) Moon, à la condition que ce

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dernier soit présenté sous la garantie de la Croix Rouge anglaise.

Inspecteur Général du service de santé.

Par ordre

Le médecin principal de 2me classe.

(Signé) D. MERISTIROU.

5. The next step was to obtain this said guarantee of the English Red Cross. This involved (a) my appearance at 83 Pall Mall with two certificates of respectability, (b) the filling up of a new paper of minute inquiries, and (c) a personal inspection by Sir F. Treves.

6. About two days later I received from the obliging Secretary of the Anglo-French Hospitals Committee the following memo :—

‘12th August, 1915.

‘The Secretary has pleasure in enclosing
‘(1) The Pink Slip addressed to the Per-

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‘mit Office ; (2) Your Anglo-French Certificate ; (3) A White Form giving name and rank of the French official who signed the request for your services, name of the Hospital to which you are going, &c. ; (4) The Pink Slip addressed to Mr. Folker, who will let you have dressings for your Anglo-French uniform which you must wear when leaving this country.

‘*Will you kindly sign and return receipt at foot of Certificate ?*

‘As the Hospital to which you are going is in the Zone of the Armies, it is necessary that you have your Passport endorsed, making it Valid for the Zone of the Armies.

‘To obtain this endorsement it is necessary to present at the Permit Office, 19 Bedford Square, W.C., your passport, together with the enclosed papers—

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‘(1) The Pink Slip, (2) The White Form,
‘(3) The Anglo-French Certificate. At
‘the Permit Office your Passport will also
‘be visé for France.’

N.B.—The Anglo - French Certificate was endorsed with a photo. garnished with the rubber-impressed stamp of the Anglo-French Hospitals Committee at each of its four corners, and two Statements, viz. :

- (a) The holder of this certificate must obtain a brassard from the Belgian Military Authorities in Belgium.
- (b) The holder is entitled to wear the Anglo-French uniform sanctioned by the British and French Military Authorities.

7. A visit to 16 Regent Street revealed the fact that the Anglo-French Hospitals Committee had just made new dress

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regulations.* Consequently I had to buy the new 'dressings,' send my uniform back to the tailor, get rid of a Sam Browne belt which I had bought the day before, and put off my journey.

8. A morning was consumed in getting the Permit at Bedford Square and the French visa.

9. At Folkestone I had to receive a further paper from a Belgian official there. This made it necessary to go down by a train some hours earlier than the boat train.

10. In Belgium I was asked questions for about thirty minutes as to myself, my wife, and my relatives—such abstruse and perplexing inquiries as 'The place where

* The colours and the device on the cover of this booklet represent the colours and badges of this new uniform prescribed by the Anglo-French Committee.

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your wife was born.' I boldly said London, and was relieved when I was not interrogated as to the hour, the street, and the house. I could have given at once the month and the day of the month, but the year would have needed calculation. Alas! what booted it to have had the two certificates of respectability signed—the one by an unimpeachable Peer of the Realm, and the other by a Lord Justice of H. M.'s High Court of Justice—to have sat, without ignominy, for more than ten years, as the representative of part of the metropolis, in the Commons House of Parliament? At last the *questionnaire* was over and I apparently had emerged from the ordeal successfully, as in a few days I became the proud possessor of a '*carte d'identité*,' and, at a later stage, of passes entitling me to drive (!) an automobile in most of

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Belgium which lay to the west of the Furnes-Ypres road.

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At the risk of deserving the title, bestowed on Prince Gortschakoff, of the *Narcisse de l'encrier*, I append two of the reports which I made to the Committee in London, as they give some idea of the buildings and some idea of how my time was spent. There were other not less difficult problems, such as evacuation, heating, lighting, and, most of all, sanitation. On some of these the Committee had, before I left England, expressly instructed me to report. On others I reported in order to place before my fellow-members of the Committee, who had not had the privilege of coming out, as complete a picture as possible of the conditions, needs, and difficulties.

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These reports may help to explain how the four weeks of office—with all their varied interest—seemed not less strenuous than four weeks of a contested election. There were, of course, many minor conundrums: places at table, uniforms, the choking of Primus stoves—because of the bad quality of the only paraffin procurable—the risks of substituting petrol for paraffin, the conversion of a barn into a motor repair-shop, the satisfying of demands for more lamps here and there, more stoves, an extra steriliser, an additional acetylene generator, the provision of zinc for officers' coffins, the consideration of requests to be taken hither and thither in the cars of the Hospital at a time when the chauffeur-staff had gone down almost to zero.

I sometimes wondered whether my task was like that of the Governor of some

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small Crown Colony, or of a Collector in India, or more like that of Sancho Panza in the island of Barataria. However, with so short a term of office, it was easy to say in the most trying annoyances, ‘dabit Deus his quoque finem,’ and all through to feel with an assurance fuller than that of Aeneas,

‘Haec olim meminisse juvabit.’

APPENDIX I.

FIRE.—PART I.

28 August, 1915.

1. The Belgian Field Hospital is installed in the buildings and grounds of the Hospice Y. (see Annex A, p. 68), part only of which was requisitioned by the Belgian Government on the 27 January, 1915, from the Burgomaster of X. (see Annex B, p. 70).

2. There is, therefore, a duality of control between our Committee and the Belgian Government, and also between the Hospice Committee and the Belgian Government; doubtless, however, the

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Hospice Committee would permit or co-operate in a general scheme.

3. The main building is of brick with stone floorings on the ground floor, and a tiled roof. It consists of two stories, with attics above. There is little cellarage. The buildings are insured by the Commune; the furniture of the Hospice is insured by the Religieuses.

4. I have been over the buildings. The only provision against fire consists of seven Minimaxes. These are all of the same type, to be struck on the ground at the base and not at the nozzle; they are marked ten pts. Matron said these were all bought in April. I should be glad to know how long the charge holds good; I have been told that it lasts only six months. (There are no refills.) These are now placed as follows: one in Ward Elizabeth, one in each of the two dormi-

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tories where the Sisters sleep ; the other four are on the ground-floor of the main building, viz., in the Kitchen, Officers' Ward, Salle de Pansement, and in the corridor just outside the operating theatre ; the rest of the buildings (including the Chapel, and the rooms of the Hospice which are not under our control) are unprovided.

5. In each of the three wards (in one of the small rooms partitioned off) are two Primus Stoves. These are generally alight, being used not only for sterilising instruments, but for boiling water. It is suggested that metal sheets should be laid on the part of the shelf where they stand, and also be fixed along the part of the wall which is near them.

The three wards are, of course, like so many match-boxes. The patients and brancardiers are continually smoking, but I am told that they are careful to put

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their used matches and cigarette ends into the spittoons, one of which is on each locker. In the Sisters' dormitories, where cubicles have been made by the means of curtains, candles are used.

I imagine, however, that the nurses and brancardiers are careful and competent people ; some one is on duty night as well as day ; so that the risks are probably less in practice than in theory.

6. A narrow, circular, enclosed wooden staircase leads off the main corridor at a point near its centre, roughly half-way between the two main broad staircases (also of wood) placed at each extremity of the corridor. The circular staircase is one of the approaches to the first floor rooms, and upwards from the first-floor is the sole approach to the long attic where the thirty-six brancardiers sleep.

The two chief chauffeurs and Dr. Goor-

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maghtigh sleep in another attic in the rear, in a gable over the Dining-room and Kitchen.

The parts mentioned in this paragraph seem rather specially dangerous if a fire were to break out in them.

7. I am no expert in these matters, but, as a provisional arrangement, I propose at once—

- (a) To detail two individuals, one for day and another for night, and make them responsible for the use of the Minimaxes where each machine is.
- (b) To transfer to the Wards Leopold and Albert the two machines now in the Salle de Pansement and in the corridor, pending the arrival of additional machines.
- (c) To place two pails with shovels at suitable points in each of the three Wards, and to arrange that one of

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the brancardiers on duty (two being always on duty at once) should fling the sand from the two pails while the other uses the Minimax.

- (d) To caution the Sisters as to care in using candles, and in keeping lamps, &c., far from the fumes of ether or chloroform.

8. I beg the Committee to consult some expert (I believe the head man at any L.C.C. Fire Depôt is always most obliging in such matters), and to suggest further measures or alterations in those above proposed. Doubtless two or more machines should be obtained to replace those shifted, and others got to use in the Hospice portions of the buildings, and in other buildings in the rear. These are as follows :—

- (a) The first line of buildings in rear of the main building may be called the

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‘offices.’ These are of brick and tile, and used partly by us and partly by the Hospice. We use one barn as a forge, other parts for coal-shed and laundry rooms. It contains also stalls for cows and pigsties. The offices are in two sections, and the urinals and Hospice w.c.’s lie between these two sections. The Matron’s wooden store is built on to the end of the section nearest to the Wards, in a position very convenient to the Wards.

(b) Two further wooden buildings have been put up in the immediate rear of the main block, between the main block and the offices, viz., (1) a place where the brancardiers dine, &c., (2) a shed touching the main wall at two points to shelter the car of the Service Radiologique.

(c) Behind the row of offices to which

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the Matron's store is attached, is a third continuous row containing pack-store, and the premises of the Mother Superior and Dr. Bruneel's laboratory.

(*d*) There is yet a fourth row of wholly wooden buildings, containing a Mortuary, a Post-mortem room, and a store of motor-appliances.

9. The case of the wooden wards and annexes is evidently the most urgent, and will become more so when the cold weather comes on. The full provision of machines—say one in each room of the brick and tile part—would be expensive. I think a Minimax costs about £5, a Miller £3 to £4. Much would depend on the policy of the Committee as to remaining. It might, of course, be possible to induce the Belgian Government or the Hospice to provide them or take them over on terms to be agreed.

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I may mention that I visited a Military Hospital several miles away this week. There they had in each of the eighteen wards two 'Extinguishers' of the Miller (Glasgow) make, which works differently. They are cheaper than the Minimaxes, but doubtless it is not desirable to have two types on one property, and, if I recollect right, the Minimax is decidedly simpler.

These wards are, I understand, of the same size and pattern as ours; they have stoves set up in them. No doubt, if and when we remain and put in stoves, the risks of fire will be considerably increased.

The Committee will also bear in mind that there is a fourth ward built but not yet occupied, which will have to be organized in the same way.

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PART II.

The mobilisation of the Staff is a more difficult question. The Committee may be able to send me some leaflet of three or four pages from the Fire Brigade Department of the L.C.C.

In case of a fire in the main building, it may be best to use the chapel bell as a tocsin in the ordinary way—ringing it rapidly and violently instead of gently and slowly. The aumônier would himself do this, if so instructed. It would summon people from outside and not only give an alarm to our Staff.

In the case of a partial or local fire, it might be better to give the alarm by whistles or by beating on wood or iron.

No doubt some systems of fire stations and fire drill, of forming a double line so that pails of earth may be passed along.

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(We are of course handicapped by the lack of water and lack of sand. The soil here is clay.)

These are, however, only amateur suggestions, and it is clearly bad to start a system which might have to be changed shortly on better information.

PART III.

Bombardment.—Dr. Willems proposes in such a case to telephone to General Mélis for instructions. I agreed that each case would depend so much on its own circumstances that it was impossible to formulate a plan beforehand.

ANNEX A.

The Buildings.—Y., the founder, was a rich notary who built it in the 'seventies and partially endowed it. It is vested in

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a Committee appointed by the Commune, and is subject to inspection by the Minister of the Interior. The full complement is forty to fifty. At present there are twenty-five old men and five old women. The remainder were distributed elsewhere (with compensation).

A priest in uniform is detailed to serve as chaplain (*aumônier*) to the Hospital. He says mass daily in the Chapel. There are about twelve Sisters of the St. Vincent de Paul Order, chosen by the Committee, who attend to the old people; these Sisters speak Flemish only, with one or two exceptions.

The property lies on the east side of the Furnes-Ypres high road, having a frontage of about 158 yards and a depth of 132 yards. The grounds between the main building and road are prettily arranged with trees, shrubs, and grass.

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ANNEX B.

REÇU DE FOURNITURES REQUISES.

Grand Quartier Général.

Le soussigné Keersmaekers, Victor, médecin de bataillon de 2^e cl. reconnaît avoir reçu du Bourgmestre de la Commune de X., province de FLANDRE OCCIDENTALE, les prestations dont le détail suit, savoir :

Vingt-deux locaux (rooms) :

Le terrain derrière l'Hospice et occupé par des annexes en bois à fournir par l'Hospice X., à partir du vingt-sept janvier 1915, jusqu'au.....

Quatorze francs par jour d'occupation.

LE MÉDECIN DE BATAILLON DE 2^e CL.

A. X.

le vingt-sept janvier, 1915.

APPENDIX II.

WATER SUPPLY.

A. *Drinking*.—This is obtained from treating water pumped up in the kitchen from a well of the ordinary kind. The treatment is Nesfield process of sterilising, which has been used here four or five months. This form of sterilising gives or leaves a disagreeable taste. It has, therefore, been the practice to neutralise this by adding the juice of fresh lemon, say twelve to twenty lemons for one day's brew. In other words, there is no *fresh* drinkable water.

B. *For Washing Dishes, Vegetables, Floors, Making Tea, Coffee, &c.*, water

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is taken from a pump in the yard. This was inspected officially before I came, and a notice is placed above it in French and Flemish strictly forbidding the drinking of it. It then gets a preliminary heating in a sheltered place in the open air, near the Hospice latrines, because there is no room in the kitchen. Between 12 and 1 p.m. each day, the water in this open-air boiler is raised to the boil, and is used for washing the floor and dishes, &c. At other times the partially-boiled water is raised to the boil in the kitchen boilers (by which I mean big cooking-pots standing on the range), and is used for tea, coffee, &c.

C. *For Washing.* — This has been provided since about the first of April by damming the brook which forms the eastern limit of the property, and so making a pond. The protracted drought,

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however, dried up last week both pond and brook. The Gestionnaire, on the 27th August, got hold, unofficially, of a military water-cart and obtained enough for a day or two, but we require a regular supply until rain fills the brook and the pond. In April or May, they dug 10 mètres deep on the property to find water, without success.

I went, therefore, on the 28th August to the Medical Department of the Belgian Headquarters to seek for help. Attention was promised, and to-day came a memo. from the third section of the G.Q.G., stating that two barrels, each containing 225 litres, say, 50 gallons, would be put at our disposal ; that these barrels would arrive at Furnes station probably to-morrow ; that the 2 D.A. (Headquarters at X.) had been requested to supply us with horse, cart, and driver for three

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hours a day during the drought, to carry these barrels; that we were to communicate direct with the 2 D.A. The Gestionnaire will arrange accordingly with the 2 D.A., and Mr. Young will bring the barrels here from Furnes.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that the idea was mooted at Headquarters that an electric station was to be set up within a mile of this hospital. If this idea materialises, we might (1) effect an in-offensive sterilisation by means of ultra-violet rays, and (2) instal electric lighting.

NOTE.—I subsequently took for analysis two samples of the lemonised drinking-water to an establishment founded by a Scotch lady for the medical relief of Belgian civilians, near the sea. While these samples were being analysed, the Second in Command to Colonel Thooft, at Headquarters, happened to be at the Belgian Field Hos-

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pital, and explained to me what, perhaps, I ought to have known, that the boiling of water is safer than any system of chemical sterilisation. After much consultation it has been arranged that the necessary water should be boiled in that one of our four sterilisers which deals with the ward dressings, as there is no room in the kitchen. This arrangement has apparently been successful.

The Second Division of the Army continued day by day to get our two barrels filled, and this relieved the anxiety of the talented lady who, without the ample space or any of the expensive and elaborate appliances provided at the Military Hospital before mentioned, conducted with unfailing cheerfulness and great business capacity the seemingly dull drudgery of our unsophisticated laundry.

APPENDIX III.

THE BATTLE OF THE DUNES—AND DUNKIRK.

‘The country around is little better than a dreary waste of sand-hills thrown up by the sea and wind. It was in this neighbourhood that Turenne defeated, in 1658, the Spanish army under Don John of Austria and the great Condé, who had sided at that time with the enemies of France, in the Battle of the Dunes. The siege of the town (Dunkirk) had been commenced by Mazarin, at the dictation of Cromwell, whose fleet blockaded it by sea. The Spaniards, unprovided with artillery, advanced to attack the French,

THE BATTLE OF THE DUNES.

by marching close to the shore. Condé remonstrated in vain with Don John against a movement so perilous: 'Vous ne connaissez pas M. de Turenne,' said Condé; 'on ne fait pas impunément des fautes devant un si grand homme;' and just as the action began he turned to the young Duke of York and asked if he had ever been in a battle before. 'No,' answered the Duke. 'Then you will see one lost in half an hour.' The action was commenced by 6000 English soldiers of Cromwell, commanded by Lockhart, his ambassador, who formed the left wing of the French army, and distinguished themselves eminently; their charge carried everything before it, and contributed not a little to the victory. The Duke of York (afterwards James II). fought in the Spanish ranks, at the head of a regiment of Cavaliers; and it was from them that

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their fellow-countrymen suffered most. The Spaniards lost 4000 men, and Dunkirk surrendered ten days after. . . . It was basely sold by Charles II. to Louis XIV. in 1662 for five millions of livres (246,600*l.*). By the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) the French were compelled to demolish the fortifications, which were not rebuilt until after 1783.'

*Murray's 'Handbook to France' (1890),
p. 372.*

London: Strangeways, Printers.

